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United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Economic and Social Council, in its 2003 ministerial declaration, highlighted the importance of promoting partnerships among stakeholders in support of the aims of rural development. In response, and in pursuance of Council resolutions 2004/49 and 2005/42, the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development was launched as an ad hoc initiative of the Council to help further these aims, with Madagascar and the Dominican Republic serving as the first two pilot countries for the Alliance. The first report of the Alliance (E/2007/61) was considered by the Council at its substantive session of 2007.

The present report has been prepared in response to Council resolution 2007/36, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its substantive session of 2009. By the same resolution, the Council welcomed Angola and Ethiopia as the third and fourth pilot countries in the Alliance. The present report provides updated information on the activities undertaken in the first two pilot countries since the previous report and provides examples of activities carried out by stakeholders in support of rural development in the two new pilot countries.

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I. Introduction

A. Background

1. The present report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/36, on the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its substantive session of 2009 on the implementation of the work of the Alliance.

2. The United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development was launched following the outcome of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2003 of the Council, which considered the theme "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development". In the ministerial declaration[1] adopted at that session, the Council underlined the importance of alliances among all stakeholders for the promotion of rural development and realization of its aims, which it considered essential to reducing poverty and achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

3. The key aims of the Alliance are threefold: (a) to work as a catalyst and facilitator in the promotion of partnerships among all stakeholders in support of rural development; (b) to provide a platform for collaboration; and (c) to highlight the results of the efforts of stakeholders by bringing them to the attention of the international community, through the Economic and Social Council.

4. By its resolutions 2004/49 and 2005/42, the Council welcomed the initiatives of the Governments of Madagascar and the Dominican Republic to serve as the first and second pilot countries of the Alliance. By the same resolutions, the Council invited all Member States, the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions, civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to support the programmes and activities of the Alliance in its goal of promoting sustainable rural development. By its resolution 2007/36, the Council welcomed the interest expressed and the initiative of the Governments of Angola and Ethiopia to serve as the third and fourth pilot countries for the Alliance.

5. The present report provides updated information on activities carried out in support of strengthening public-private partnerships in the first two pilot countries, outlined in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development (E/2007/61). It also provides examples of stakeholder initiatives in the two more recent pilot countries, Angola and Ethiopia.[2] Also included is a section on activities undertaken at United Nations Headquarters in support of the four pilot countries. In addition, the report examines the impact of the current financial and economic crisis on efforts to achieve rural development in those countries. Section III of the report puts forward recommendations for strengthening the activities of the Alliance.

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[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/58/3/Rev.1), chap. III, para. 35.

[2] Organizations which provided inputs to the present report are listed in the annex.

B. Importance of rural development

6. One of the Millennium Development Goals, which represent a global strategic partnership formulated to respond to the world's main development challenges, is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. As three of every four poor people in developing countries — over one billion of them — live in rural areas, the promotion of rural development is essential to reducing poverty and promoting better standards of living for much of the world's population. This requires broad-based investment in rural areas that benefits entire communities, not only those engaged in agricultural activities.

7. Agricultural development alone is not enough to drastically reduce poverty but has proven to be uniquely powerful in helping to achieve that goal. Historically, improvements to this vital sector have been the foundation for overall economic development and poverty reduction. In most developing countries, agriculture is the largest employer, job creator and export earner. An increase in agricultural productivity contributes significantly to poverty reduction, especially in rural areas. A study of 58 developing countries found that a 10 per cent increase in agricultural productivity was associated with as much as a 6 per cent reduction in the proportion of people living on $1 a day.[3]

8. Rural infrastructure and support services play a key role in promoting rural development, specifically in the enhancement of agricultural production. They affect the quality, quantity, diversity, affordability, distribution and stability of the food supply from rural areas. Roads, transport, water and irrigation, power and telecommunications are important elements of rural infrastructure, and essential for rural transformation.

9. The improvement of access to water resources and improved sanitation are important both for the healthy livelihoods of rural populations and for agricultural production. Restricted access to safe drinking water and inadequate sanitation are root causes of many diseases that affect rural people in developing countries, reducing their capacity for productive work and thus diminishing their chances of escaping from poverty. In addition, in the past decade, there have been growing disparities in access to health care, with the majority of the poor, especially in rural areas, particularly disadvantaged in that regard. Furthermore, unanticipated medical expenditure is the second highest cause of rural indebtedness.

10. For rural development policies and programmes to succeed, it is crucial that they ensure that the most vulnerable people are protected. Achieving gender equality is essential for accelerating sustainable rural development, especially since women represent a considerable majority of the agricultural workforce. It has been estimated that rural women produce more than one half of the food grown in the world, provide up to 90 per cent of the labour in rice cultivation and play a key role in non-farm ancillary services, such as the sale of produce. Providing safety nets for them is vital to maintain both agricultural production systems and the rural family structure.

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[3] Lin Lin and others, "Agricultural productivity and poverty in developing countries", extension to DFID Report, No. 7946 (London, United Kingdom Department for International Development, 2001).

11. Rural development should be mainstreamed in national development frameworks and poverty reduction strategies. Policy decisions to advance rural development must be participatory and their implementation should involve all stakeholders. Ensuring that the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard may significantly assist in the successful implementation of such policies.

12. Commitment to investment in agricultural and productivity improvement should be maintained to hasten the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Evidence shows that agricultural growth promotes rural and non-farm employment and has a considerable poverty-reducing effect.

C. Promotion of partnerships for rural development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

13. As stressed above, poverty and hunger reduction targets will not be met unless the level of poverty in rural areas is reduced. No agency or organization can single-handedly successfully tackle all of the challenges associated with rural development, or act alone as the advocate for its advancement. Consequently, partnerships are vital in tackling rural development and ultimately achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

14. This was emphasized by the Economic and Social Council in its 2003 ministerial declaration, in which it outlined the essential requirements to be met in pursuing these aims in developing countries. Considered crucial in the promotion of an integrated approach to rural development was the critical role played by partnerships at the national and international levels in fostering collaboration among the actors in various sectors.

15. The ministerial declaration of the Council has contributed to raising awareness regarding the importance of agricultural and rural development in furthering the development agenda, in particular with respect to combating the twin scourges of poverty and hunger. Various development partners have embarked on an initiative to bring together and improve the harmonization of their activities. Several examples of these partnership initiatives in the four pilot countries are provided in section II below.

16. Jointly preparing and implementing national rural strategies in recipient countries is an effective way of fostering both the mutual learning and information exchange required to ensure maximum development impact. Of crucial importance is the incorporation of the concerns of the rural poor in all facets of the strategic development framework.

17. The difficulty in tackling rural poverty reduction is greater today than in 2003. Old challenges persist, while new threats push the rural poor ever deeper into poverty. The increase in global food prices, which impacts directly on the poorest, especially the landless rural population, indicates an even more urgent need to improve conditions in agriculture and in rural areas. Simultaneously, the effects of climate change are undermining agricultural production, in particular in the more marginal areas where a large proportion of the rural poor live.

18. In order to increase the number of resources committed to rural development as well as to achieve development impact in rural areas, global partnerships need to share the lessons of experience, including best practices, build local capacity and enhance global advocacy for rural poverty reduction.

D. Impact and challenges of current crises on rural development

19. The scale and reach of the current financial crisis poses the threat of a rapidly deteriorating outlook for the world economy, which is expected to contract by about 2 per cent in 2009. Growth in emerging and developing countries is expected to slow from 6.25 per cent in 2008 to 3.25 per cent in 2009 owing to falling export demand and financing, lower commodity prices and much tighter external financing constraints.[4] The crisis has already seriously set back the development efforts of many poorer countries and increased the magnitude of the challenges faced.

20. Amid this grim prognosis, an overriding concern of the international community is the bleak situation now being faced with regard to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The efforts of most developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals benefited from the improved economic growth and relatively low inflation that characterized the first years of the current millennium. However, with the downturn in the global economy, the gains achieved in the past decade are likely to dissipate and in some instances their reversal has already begun. New estimates by the World Bank suggest that 46 million more people will fall below the $1.25 a day poverty line and an extra 53 million people will be forced to live on less than $2 a day, compared to estimates made before the onset of the crisis.[5]

21. The global financial crisis comes on top of the food and energy crises in 2008, which had already pushed 130-155 million people into poverty between late 2005 and early 2008. Higher food prices added 115 million hungry people in 2007 and 2008, raising the total to close to 1 billion.[6] Rising food prices have also threatened the limited gains in alleviating child malnutrition. By 2006, the number of children in developing countries who were underweight exceeded 140 million, and it is now predicted that this global situation will be exacerbated by higher food prices. The Secretary-General's High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis has highlighted the need for increased investment in the agricultural sector to address some of the structural issues related to food security.

22. Climate change is an additional challenge as it modifies the physical and socio-economic conditions within which life occurs. Agricultural production is expected to fall in tropical and most temperate regions as a consequence of climate variability and the uncertain length of the growing season, decreased water availability, new patterns exhibited by pests and diseases and loss of biodiversity. It is the poorest and most vulnerable people in rural areas who are expected to be hit the hardest. Increases in temperature will reduce not only the yields of most crops

[4] International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Update*, 28 January 2009.

[5] World Bank, "Crisis hitting poor hard in developing world", press release No. 2009/220/EXC, 12 February 2009.

[6] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates, 2008.

but the area of land available for crop growth. Furthermore, occurrences of drought and heavy flooding are likely to become more frequent and severe.

23. Given the limited institutional and financial capacities at the local level, the challenges posed by climate change will impact on poverty, hunger and the health conditions of rural communities. The living conditions of poor rural households and farmers who depend on natural resources and subsistence agriculture risk further deterioration.

II. Activities in support of rural development in the four pilot countries

A. Madagascar

1. Overview

24. With 80 per cent of the population of Madagascar living in rural areas and most living below the poverty line, its Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries in 2004 developed a five-year master plan for rural development which focused on sustained market-oriented business to develop the country's rural economy in an effort to significantly reduce rural poverty. Extensive services to strengthen agribusiness were introduced, including expanding market information systems, cooperative business formation, and creating rural child nutrition programmes.

25. The Government of Madagascar has integrated rural development and a green revolution as part of its Madagascar Action Plan, the second generation poverty reduction strategy for the period 2007-2012. Within this plan, the Government aims to secure land tenure, improve access to affordable rural financing, launch a sustainable green revolution, promote market-oriented activities, diversify rural activities, increase the agricultural value added and promote agribusiness. The Government has also been striving to establish an agribusiness centre in every region of the country to train and assist rural farmers and create better roads and communications to facilitate greater entrepreneurial and private sector involvement.

26. Globally, Madagascar is one of the richest nations in terms of biodiversity but it faces high levels of environmental stress caused by severe poverty among its people. A cycle of environmental degradation and poverty is created wherever agricultural needs lead to poor management of resources (i.e., forest loss, soil erosion, decreasing water availability), which in turn leads to increased poverty and a greater need for agricultural expansion. One of the key goals of the Madagascar Action Plan is to protect the environment by developing around it industry such as eco-tourism, promoting sustainable farming practices, and expanding the market for organic and natural products. The Government's commitment to advancing rural agriculture through these types of national programmes aims to lift the people of Madagascar out of poverty by 2015. However, the political crisis since January 2009 has had a negative impact on development efforts.

2. Activities of United Nations agencies and organizations

27. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has in recent years placed greater emphasis on the importance of private sector development,

which provides most income-generating activities and job-creation opportunities and is increasingly the driving force for economic growth and poverty reduction. The Executive Board of IFAD has adopted a private sector development strategy which identifies the key elements of the institution's engagement with the private sector. Based on this strategy, IFAD supports local and private sector development through both policy dialogue and investment operations. It also enters into partnerships with the private sector in leveraging additional resource flows to rural areas.

28. The Fund supports the efforts of the Government of Madagascar to promote growth in the agricultural sector and the development of agro-based industry through four rural projects:

(a) The Rural Income Promotion Programme, which aims to increase the incomes and enhance the food security of the people living in one of the country's poorest provinces;

(b) The Upper Mandraré Basin Development Project — Phase II, which was completed in 2008 and was aimed at boosting food production in part of the dry region of the far south and helping to strengthen the food security of rural inhabitants and improve their living conditions;

(c) The Support Programme for the Rural Microenterprise Poles and Regional Economies, which was implemented in May 2008 and supports collaboration with the private sector through micro and small enterprises, value chains and professional organizations;

(d) The Support to Farmers' Professional Organizations and Agricultural Services Project, which was approved in 2008 and came into effect in January 2009. The overall objective of the project is to strengthen farmers' organizations in order to improve agricultural incomes and reduce the vulnerability of small producers (especially the poorest among them) by facilitating their access to a range of services and appropriate technology.

29. The implementation by the World Bank of its Agricultural Extension Programme Support Project in Madagascar has resulted in a partnership arrangement between the executing agency and other entities in the public sector, communes, non-governmental organizations and the private sector that have capacities for technology transfer and training. The Bank's Rural Development Support Project seeks to promote the identification of poverty-reducing, income-generating rural development programmes through greater participation by the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Various projects funded by the International Finance Corporation in the country also envisage greater scope for private sector involvement.

30. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has carried out a project financed by the Swedish International Development Agency, aimed at operationalizing pro-poor growth in two of the country's rural communities. Underprivileged families have been trained to identify potential economic opportunities in their communities and then work together with enterprises to develop local employment. Training methodologies employed by the International Labour Organization included training for rural economic empowerment and value chain analysis and upgrading. The latter enabled stakeholders from the local communities, the region and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry to examine another export-oriented

sector, embroidery, with a view to identifying ways in which to improve quality and stimulate employment.

31. Following the advocacy efforts of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Madagascar in New York and the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, the first millennium village was established in the rural commune of Sambaina, with funding from the Government of the Republic of Korea. The African millennium villages, promoted by the Millennium Project and the Earth Institute of Columbia University, offer a scalable model for fighting poverty at the village level and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The millennium village initiative works directly with the respective communities, non-governmental organizations and national governments to show how rural African communities can lift themselves out of poverty and achieve the Goals if they have access to proven and powerful technologies that can enhance their farm productivity, health, education and access to markets, while operating within the budget constraints established by international agreements for official development assistance.

32. The Sambaina Millennium Village project is currently implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) together with the Government of Madagascar. For the period 2008-2013, a host of partners from the public and private sectors are implementing the project, including the Ministry within the Presidency of the Republic in charge of Decentralization, the Government of Madagascar, United Nations agencies, local non-governmental organizations and local authorities. Through these partnerships and the expertise of all sectors, the project is geared towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

33. Within the framework of this initiative, a multitude of innovative projects are under way. For instance, in November 2008, an exchange of farmers between Sambaina and Antsirabe, a nearby village more advanced in rural development, took place with the goal of Sambaina villagers learning different agricultural techniques. In addition, an electrification project for the area of Ankadimanga was also initiated. Recent developments in the area, including a health centre and a primary and secondary school, had made Ankadimanga a hub for thousands of people and thus emphasized the need for electrification. This was made possible because of the positive partnership with the country's Rural Electrification Development Agency.

34. The Growing Sustainable Business initiative of UNDP works to build business-led solutions to poverty, by enabling the private sector, through building strategic partnerships between local stakeholders, to make a greater contribution to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Its initiative in Madagascar has actively facilitated innovative and pro-poor business ventures in a number of sectors. Activities undertaken include promoting eco-tourism, encouraging the use of solar power, strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises in the hydrocarbon sector, promoting energy diversification, and furthering the production of artemisinin-based remedies against malaria.

3. Activities of civil society organizations

35. The Public-Private Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing poverty through a business approach to development. The Foundation brings together the corporate sector, government, civil society, academia and the United Nations to facilitate linkages, promote partnerships, encourage capacity-building and mobilize resources, commerce and investment in support of

development. Its aim is to forge productive linkages among organizations which are able to enhance pro-poor business at the national level, many of which have scant knowledge of the United Nations and the Millennium Development Goals.

36. The Permanent Mission of Madagascar in New York recently partnered with the Foundation, Maventy Health International and Project C.U.R.E. to make a permanent impact with the shipment to Madagascar of three 40-foot containers of medical equipment worth $1.2 million. The project aims to bring about sustainable infrastructure development in the health-care sector for the benefit of thousands of Malagasy people.

37. To meet the costs of the shipments of the medical equipment, the Permanent Mission of Madagascar, the Public-Private Foundation and Project C.U.R.E worked together once more to raise an additional US$ 100,000 from private donors. The first container was delivered in March 2009 and two additional containers are to be sent during the third quarter of 2009. Based on a needs assessment, the medical equipment will be delivered to the Befelatanana Hospital in Antananarivo, the Regional Hospital of Diego in Diego Suarez, and the Anivorano Nord Clinic.

38. The Osservatorio per la Communicazione Culturale e l'Audiovisivo nel Mediterraneo e nel Mondo (Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication) (OCCAM) was established in 1997 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, initially as a project based on the notion that communication is fundamental to social, economic and cultural development. The organization, which is now in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, focuses its work on the promotion of the crucial United Nations values of peace, tolerance and human rights through audiovisual means of communication: cinema, television and the Internet.

39. Over the past two years, OCCAM has increased its activities in support of the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development by bringing the benefits of the digital revolution to disadvantaged communities in Madagascar and the Dominican Republic. In support of activities in the pilot countries, OCCAM widened its partnership with both public and private institutions to the Infopoverty Institute at the University of Oklahoma, the Politecnico di Milano, Skylogic, WINFOCUS and the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Milan.

40. In September 2007, OCCAM undertook a mission to Madagascar, meeting with representatives of the ministries of health, education and foreign affairs, to discuss the delivery of e-health services to the country. In January 2008, in collaboration with WINFOCUS (an international non-profit scientific society which promotes the use of point-of-care ultrasound in clinical practice in order to improve primary, emergency and critical care in hospitals), it organized a two-day training course for 72 doctors and nurses on the use of ultrasound technology in emergency situations.

41. Since September 2008, a partnership between OCCAM and Skylogic enabled the first information and communications technology model village in Madagascar to have a free one-year Internet connectivity, thus boosting the use of the Internet and computers by local partners, ranging from farmers to teachers, at the new community resource centre. About 500 persons from Sambaina and the neighbouring district of Manjakandriana continue to use the local services on a

regular basis, while 600 students aged from 11 to 15 years receive regular training to accelerate the digital literacy of the rural village.

42. In 2007 and 2008, the Agricultural Cooperative Development International/ Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Association (ACDI/VOCA), with funding from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, provided consultancy services and assistance to Madagascar's Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries. In efforts to combat poverty and corruption, ACDI/VOCA conducted training to build the capacity of the Ministry and strengthen partnerships for rural development and agricultural marketing. In addition, it provided technical assistance in agribusiness to help the Ministry improve investment incentives in agriculture.

43. Maventy Health International works with the Ministry of Health in Madagascar, along with several other non-profit organizations, to promote the development of a sustainable health-care model in the Anivorano Nord region in the northern part of the country. The Organization has collaborated with Project C.U.R.E. in supporting the development of medical projects and, in September 2008, signed a memorandum of understanding with Sepsis Alliance to consider a collaborative approach in the fight against infectious diseases as they relate to sepsis. Its health-related work, including the facilitation and coordination of the international collaborative initiatives of organizations interested in improving health-care delivery in Madagascar, has contributed considerably to rural development efforts.

B. Dominican Republic

1. Overview

44. In the last two years, the Dominican Republic has grown an average of 7 per cent. Agriculture is still a major part of the economy of the Dominican Republic. Over 30 per cent of the land is suitable for cropping, 17 per cent of the workforce is engaged in this sector and, in 2006, agriculture made up 9.9 per cent of the annual gross domestic product. The agriculture sector is the biggest source of domestic consumption and the second largest export earner. After joining the Central America Free Trade Agreement (now known as DR-CAFTA) in 2007, agricultural export growth has accelerated, and after the provisional entry into force of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the CARICOM and the European Community, agricultural exports have grown at an annual rate of 50 per cent.

45. Nevertheless, serious challenges face the agricultural sector, most of which derive from the vulnerability of the country, including to frequent hurricanes, earthquakes and tropical storms. Tropical storms in September 2007, for instance, were responsible for a loss of $1.8 billion in revenues that year. In addition, low public investment, decreasing availability of credit, weak productive infrastructure and low levels of education in the workforce all impede the advancement of the agricultural sector. To tackle these challenges, the Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development was established in 2004. The Commission is charged with monitoring and evaluating the country's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals; its participants include representatives of various sectors, such as government, private sector and civil society, and the United Nations (through the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development). Its task force on hunger aims to strengthen these

partnerships in order to raise awareness of and increase the attention paid to the Millennium Development Goals in low-income areas.

46. Many public-private alliances have been developed during recent years. Examples are some which enable the leasing of machinery from the private sector through the Ministry of Agriculture, joint planning and rice-importing agreements, the financial support provided to small farmers and agro-industrial enterprises by government institutions, and the partnership of the FAO Special Programme for Food Security with the Ministry of Agriculture and non-governmental organizations. These developments work to counter the numerous challenges mentioned above and promote rural development as a whole.

2. Activities of United Nations agencies and organizations

47. The IFAD country programme for the Dominican Republic has two major strategic objectives: (a) social capital and community development; and (b) income generation. Regarding the latter, efforts are directed towards the identification of agricultural and non-agricultural income-generating activities and facilitating the participation of small producers in local, national and export markets.

48. In response to the request of the Government of the Dominican Republic and in alignment with the country's social and economic development policies, IFAD has recently finalized the design of a new project that aims to improve the competitiveness and linkages to markets of smallholder farmers and their economic organizations in the poorest areas of the country, specifically, the 11 western provinces on the border with Haiti. The project will focus on both staple food crops (e.g., rice, beans and bananas) for local, regional and national markets, and niche export commodities (e.g. quality coffee and organically grown bananas).

49. The project will actively promote alliances among key public or private players involved in the selected value chains. The objective of these alliances is to reinforce the relationship between smallholder producer organizations and the key private sector players in the value chain. These stronger relationships will improve the long-term position of producer organizations as suppliers in national and international markets. Other project components include strengthening smallholder farmers' organizations by building management and marketing capacities, and promoting technological innovation and diversification, as well as rural finance.

50. The World Food Programme aims to replicate a programme supported by Fundar, a Mexican foundation with experience in the rural sector, in the Dominican Republic, given that the Dominican Republic is also prone to natural disasters. The Mexican programme provided pre-harvest credit and insurance to cover the loan to farmers with surplus capacity, as a form of protection and for agricultural extension services.

51. An irrigated land and watershed management project, currently being funded by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development with the goal of increasing productivity in irrigated agriculture and promoting beneficiary participation through water user associations, is being implemented in various parts of the Dominican Republic. Consultancy services are required for the supervision of reconditioning, modernization and follow-up work on irrigation systems and watershed management.

3. Activities of civil society organizations

52. In late 2007, OCCAM signed an agreement with the municipality of Santo Domingo Norte for the creation of a new information and communications technologies village in the country. Such villages aim to strengthen e-learning, promote telemedicine in local health-care facilities, facilitate the use of the Internet, e-mail and word-processing in local government offices, and promote the use of Internet-based consulting for improving agricultural production. Following the signing of the agreement, 30 computers were procured by OCCAM and transported to the municipality to complete the first phase of the project. In March 2008, representatives of OCCAM met with the Vice-President of the Republic in connection with the launch of the Infopoverty Programme in that country and the establishment of the Infopoverty Institute of the Caribbean at the Catholic University in Santo Domingo.

53. The Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral, a non-profit organization dedicated to contributing to the integral development of the Dominican Republic, with special emphasis on its low-income population, is committed to working for the development of the country's rural areas. The organization has initiated programmes in the area of health, basic sanitation, education, infrastructure and the environment throughout the country. It promotes entrepreneurship and has helped to create successful and sustainable microbusinesses through the introduction of microcredit grants, combining funds from its own portfolio together with training programmes. Its strengths include community participation, sustainability, networking and public-private alliances.

54. In the area of agribusiness, the Public Private Alliance Foundation, together with New York representatives of the National Supermarkets Association, the distribution company Super Produce, and the Centre for Export and Investment of the Dominican Republic, collaborated through Glocal, a local growers' organization, to meet with growers, government officials and foreign aid agencies in the Dominican Republic. Initial purchases and shipments have been made, agreements have been reached with the Dominican Agribusiness Board and Glocal, and steps are being taken to source investment and project funding for capacity-building in relation to production and supply chain management. In the area of renewable energy, the Public Private Alliance Foundation and business collaborators have explored issues of sugar-based ethanol and related bioenergy with representatives of businesses and growers, United Nations staff, investors, government officials, non-governmental organizations and universities. This has led to a partnership with ResearchPAYS, Inc., a market research consulting firm for businesses, to develop further initiatives for stakeholder collaboration in this area.

55. The Public Private Alliance Foundation has also mobilized a grant from the Western Union Foundation for microfinance training and lending by the Dominican non-governmental organization, Esperanza Internacional, and has raised funds for community efforts to rebuild housing after tropical storms hit the Dominican Republic on several occasions during the period from 2007 to 2009.

C. Angola

1. Overview

56. The end of the armed conflict in Angola, which had raged for nearly three decades, has decisively contributed to a climate of social stability and economic growth. Peace has enabled the free movement of persons and a revival of economic activity throughout the country. As a result, Angolans are participating in activities that support the fight against hunger and poverty and contribute to the development of rural communities. Since 2002, the Government's investment in the agricultural sector has been progressively and effectively increasing. This reflects the strategic importance of agriculture for the sustainable development of the country, given the vast percentage of the population that depends on it for employment and subsistence.

57. In May 2007, the Rural Development Programme, coordinated by Angola's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, was implemented. The issue of rural development is at the core of the activities of the Ministry, in addition to other programmes such as the Rural Outreach and Development Programme, which aims to provide farmers with agricultural supplies, such as seeds, fertilizers and tools, as well as technical assistance services.

58. The prime objectives of the Rural Development Programme are to: contribute to the improvement of living conditions in rural areas in an effort to align them with those in the nation's main cities; harmoniously integrate the development of rural communities in national economic and social development programmes; install systems for water capturing, processing and distribution, as well as basic sanitation; organize rural trade, crafts and local production; and disseminate basic knowledge and simple techniques considered useful for agriculture, animal rearing and the processing and transformation of animal products.

59. Following legislative elections in September 2008, and under the new structure of government, the State Secretariat for Rural Development was created as an organ of the central administration of the State, responsible for defining, monitoring, coordinating, guiding and implementing national policies in support of rural development. The fundamental objective of the Angolan Government is to reduce the levels of absolute poverty, and to promote rapid, sustainable and comprehensive economic growth, as well as the reduction of regional disparities among its 19 provinces.

60. With the creation of the State Secretariat for Rural Development came the approval, in January 2009, of the Executive Programme which aims to promote integrated rural development projects, revitalize and diversify the rural economy, stimulate the creation of community organizations, promote rural finance and trade networks and promote public-private partnerships in order to improve the capacity for intervention in the sector.

2. Activities of United Nations agencies and organizations

61. Recent initiatives of IFAD included two projects, the Northern Region Food Crops Development Project and the Northern Fishing Communities Development Programme, both of which ended their activities in 2007, when a new rural development project was approved. In collaboration with the World Bank, and with a grant from the Policy and Human Resources Development Fund (Japan), the

Market-oriented Smallholder Agriculture Project is under way. The project is aimed at increasing the agricultural production of smallholders in three rural provinces, and, among other components, its focus is on strengthening capacities of the private sector and non-governmental agricultural service providers in the project area.

62. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is supporting national efforts aimed at strengthening the country's health sector, primarily in rural areas, through the funding of two projects aimed at increasing the availability of quality, integrated reproductive health services and of reproductive health information and services for adolescents and youth. In the area of gender, population and youth, it has funded capacity development workshops organized at the municipality level, with the goal of establishing linkages between increased sustainable development and women's empowerment and participation in decision-making, as well as increasing their access to reproductive health services.

3. Activities of civil society organizations

63. A three-way partnership between ACDI/VOCA, Cabinda Gulf Oil Company and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was established in December of 2003 as the Cabinda Agribusiness Development Alliance (CADA) with the objective of increasing household wealth for a large number of families in the Cabinda Province of Angola. One successful project was a programme, funded by the Cabinda Gulf Oil Company, to build the capacity of local farmers to supply fresh produce to workers at the oil export terminal, local restaurants, stores and hotels. The project resulted in the sale of fresher and less expensive produce than that traditionally imported from outside the province.

64. In addition, CADA empowered 6,226 beneficiaries, 30 per cent of whom were women, by helping them to develop profitable businesses and providing business and agricultural training to farmers. In April 2007, 30 smallholder CADA producers took part in a four-day regional agricultural fair held in Cabinda, which had over 3,000 attendees and 295 displays of different produce.

D. Ethiopia

1. Overview

65. Ethiopia has an agriculture-based economy, which employs over 85 per cent of its population. It is often severely hit by drought which occurs throughout the region. In addition, impediments such as poor management of land and resources, limited information, lack of appropriate technology, failure to integrate relevant policies, and lack of adequate implementation capacity, keep productivity levels low.

66. Long-term food insecurity has left much of the Ethiopian population dependent on food aid for survival. Agriculture is one of the country's most promising resources and the country has the potential to be self-sufficient in grains and for development of livestock exports. With this in mind, the Government adopted the agricultural development-led industrialization strategy in 2007, which aims to use agriculture as the base for the country's overall development. Its distinctive features include the commercialization of smallholder agriculture through diversification, a shift to high-value crops, the support and development of

large-scale commercial agriculture, effective integration of farmers in domestic and external markets, and tailoring interventions to address the specific needs of the country's varied agroecological zones. The Government's role in the strategy is to create policy measures that will promote these aims. Such measures include agricultural extension and research, design and operationalization of growth corridors, agricultural export promotion, and food security and safety-net programmes.

2. Activities of United Nations agencies and organizations

67. Over the past three decades, IFAD has supported 13 rural poverty reduction projects and programmes in Ethiopia, with an estimated overall cost of US$ 588 million. IFAD has also provided debt relief to Ethiopia, amounting to US$ 28 million, under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

68. In 2008, IFAD adopted its Country Strategic Opportunities Programme for the country, which is based on Ethiopia's second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper, and other relevant planning documents. The Programme focuses on three strategic objectives and is specifically aimed at enhancing access by rural poor people to natural resources (land and water), improved agricultural production technologies and support services, and financial services.

69. Ongoing IFAD operations in Ethiopia include the Agricultural Marketing Improvement Programme, which supports the Government's commitment to improve agricultural marketing. The aim is to stabilize domestic grain prices and encourage smallholder farmers to increase production and improve their incomes. Also under way is the Participatory Small-scale Irrigation Development Programme, which improves food security, family nutrition and incomes for poor rural households by developing irrigation schemes for small-scale farmers. The Pastoral Community Development Project has also been implemented to improve the prospects for sustainable livelihoods among herders living in arid and semi-arid lowlands. Finally, the Rural Financial Intermediation Programme has been put in place to help poor people who have no access to basic financial services.

70. The World Bank's Structural Adjustment Credit Project has provided an opportunity for the private sector to use foreign exchange by increasing its availability, and enhancing its role through price decontrol and reduced State ownership and operation of assets. In addition, its National Fertilizer Sector Project has been implemented with a view to creating an enabling environment for the growth of the fertilizer sector and fertilizer use in the country. The project has been co-funded by fertilizer importers and donors.

71. The UNDP Growing Sustainable Business initiative in Ethiopia is actively facilitating innovative and pro-poor business ventures through its Support and Facilitation for Private Sector Development Programme, which is executed by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Activities undertaken include the Gaia project, involving the investment and promotion of the use of locally produced ethanol-fuelled cooking stoves, and the water project, a publicly backed commercial model for the provision of water delivery services to farmers at a commercial rate.

72. The United Nations Population Fund has supported the development of rural livelihoods in Ethiopia through its women's empowerment programme. In partnership with the United Nations Foundation and the Nike Foundation, UNFPA is

funding a three-year, US$ 1.5 million project in the area of women's empowerment. Within the framework of the Fund's mandate, such livelihood intervention programmes have an important role to play in promoting economic autonomy, particularly for women. From the perspective of UNFPA, the right combination of delivering sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention skills and knowledge can help both women and young girls increase their self-autonomy and decision-making ability.

73. The Purchase for Progress initiative of the World Food Programme, which links small farmers to the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange, is being further expanded to involve private actors. The project is in the process of setting up a new marketplace serving farmers, processors, exporters and consumers, in which, for example, the support of local food processors in areas of high malnutrition and of life science companies able to improve the micronutrient content of products can make important contributions.

3. Activities of civil society organizations

74. The LWF-Ethiopia programme of the Lutheran World Federation has, over the past two years, focused its attention on implementing its integrated community development projects in all of its geographical intervention areas in Ethiopia. The main strategic objective of the projects is to shift major programmes from building irrigation, health and school structures to educating and empowering the rural community with knowledge and skills to successfully pursue individual and community needs.

75. Ethiopia has Africa's largest livestock population, which is largely concentrated in pastoralist areas of the country. ACDI/VOCA implements the USAID Pastoralist Livelihoods Initiative which aims to assist pastoralists create access to more profitable markets, as they have been traditionally concerned with minimizing risk due to droughts and economic hardship rather than maximizing profits. ACDI/VOCA has provided training workshops to develop the business skills of pastoralists and establish operationally sustainable market facilities that enable them to sell their livestock for fair prices. In addition, a pilot intervention undertaken to support drought-affected pastoralists provided emergency bank credit and the compilation and dissemination of market information to accelerate commercial start-up and increase coordination among non-governmental organizations.

E. Activities at United Nations Headquarters

76. In May 2007, the Public Private Alliance Foundation launched its first annual "Partners against Poverty" event, in which it sought to connect policymakers with local development initiatives in the Dominican Republic and Madagascar. At its second such event, held at United Nations Headquarters in July 2008, over 70 representatives from the private sector, government, civil society and United Nations agencies gathered to discuss, under the overall theme of "Awareness, agreement and action", possible ways to increase collaboration among relevant stakeholders to promote health, agribusiness, renewable energy, sustainable tourism, issues of concern to women, microfinance and entrepreneurship in Madagascar and the Dominican Republic.

77. Sulabh International is a pan-India social service organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, working in the field of environmental sanitation. It is actively involved in implementing improved sanitation facilities throughout India, and has developed an innovative, two-pit, pour-flush compost toilet for the safe disposal of human excreta that is both hygienic and affordable. In addition, the waste is treated through a technological process for use as a soil conditioner. The organization has also developed the technology of generating biogas from human waste from public toilets for use in cooking and on-site electricity generation.

78. In April 2008, within the framework of the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, the feasibility was discussed of sending a needs assessment mission to Madagascar to evaluate possible sites in the capital city of Antananarivo for the construction of public toilet complexes with biogas and effluent treatment plants for the on-site recycling of human waste. A mission was undertaken in August 2008, and an assessment was made for the construction of eco-friendly toilets in individual homes for an environment conducive to sustainable development of the area and improvement of the health and well-being of the people. Efforts are under way to find possible sources of funding for the successful implementation of the project.

79. In both 2008 and 2009, OCCAM invited high-level representatives of the four pilot countries to participate in the annual Infopoverty Conference held each March at United Nations Headquarters. In 2008, both the President of the Republic of Madagascar and the current Vice-President of the Dominican Republic participated in the event. One of the goals of the annual meeting is to give visibility to the results achieved through the use of new digital technologies for the advancement of rural development.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

80. **In order to strengthen public-private partnerships in support of rural development in the four pilot countries, there must be a major scaling up of engagement by organizations of the United Nations system with civil society and private sector partners in close collaboration with the Governments of the four countries. United Nations entities, which have outreach to the private sector, foundations and non-governmental organizations, could expand their efforts to foster partnerships that focus broadly on sharing and coordinating resources, knowledge and expertise for furthering the goal of rural development in these countries.**

81. The current economic and financial crisis is threatening not only to wipe out any recent gains made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, but also could prevent their targets from being achieved by 2015. **The international community must therefore pay special attention to the implications of the crisis for rural populations and implement specific measures to address them. Of critical importance is the need for sufficient additional resources to be targeted towards rural and agricultural development programmes and to address the challenge of food insecurity.**

82. The fact that women make up the substantial majority of the agricultural workforce in developing countries gives crucial importance to the role of women in accelerating sustainable rural development. **The integral role that rural women play should be highlighted during consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women of the priority theme of its fifty-fourth session in 2010, review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Relevant policy recommendations could in turn serve as useful inputs to the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council, which in 2010 will focus on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women", the outcome of which could then feed into the session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2012, when it considers the priority theme of the empowerment of rural women in relation to climate change and food security.**

83. As possible follow-up to the third implementation cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which encompassed its sixteenth and seventeenth sessions and focused on rural development as one of the thematic areas, along with agriculture, land, drought, desertification and Africa, **the major groups of the Commission could be invited to pay increased attention to the promotion of rural development in each of the four pilot countries, and to report on their achievements during the overall appraisal by the Commission of the implementation of Agenda 21 during the 2016-2017 cycle. Possible inputs for the cycle could include new ideas and approaches for tackling rural development challenges in the four countries, as well as proposals and recommendations for consideration by the Commission.**

84. There is a need to replicate, adapt and scale up initiatives which have proven to be successful in the area of rural development. **To that end, efforts should be made by the United Nations system to further strengthen global advocacy, including through the sharing of information, and through discussion groups and online forums in which best practices and lessons learned could be highlighted.**

85. **In view of the voluntary nature of the Alliance, and the need to go beyond its advocacy role, consideration could be given to strengthening the support provided by the United Nations Secretariat in facilitating partnerships for rural development for the benefit of the pilot countries.**

Annex

Organizations which provided inputs to the report

Organizations of the United Nations system

World Bank

United Nations Fund for Population Activities

International Labour Organization

United Nations Office for Partnerships

United Nations Development Programme

World Food Programme

International Fund for Agricultural Development

Civil society organizations

Sulabh International

Public-Private Alliance Foundation

Lutheran World Federation

Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo integral

Maventy Health International

Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance

Osservatorio per la Communicazione Culturale e l'Audiovisivo nel Mediterraneo e nel Mundo (Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication)